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RETAIL PRICES - DECEMBER QUARTER, 1959

Index numbers of retail prices for the December quarter of 1959 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases, December Quarter, 1959

City	Aggregate All Groups			All Groups, excluding Price Movements in Potatoes and Onions		
	Index Number	Increase from -		Index Number	Increase from -	
		Dec. Qtr., 1958	Sept. Qtr., 1959		Dec. Qtr., 1958	Sept. Qtr., 1959
Brisbane ..	2615	3.6	0.8	2644	3.8	1.2
Toowoomba ..	2555	2.7	0.7	2581	2.9	1.1
Rockhampton ..	2623	4.5	0.6	2651	4.7	0.8
Townsville ..	2781	5.8	1.6	2811	5.7	1.9
Bundaberg ..	2596	3.9	1.0	2625	4.2	1.1
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	2622	3.8	0.8	2650	3.9	1.2

The "C" Series index number for Brisbane during the December quarter, 1959, was 0.8 per cent. higher than in the previous quarter, continuing the general increase shown by the index in recent times. However, the rise of 3.6 per cent. during the twelve months was the lowest for any twelve months period since that ended December, 1957. Toowoomba, Rockhampton, and Bundaberg each recorded quarterly rises similar to Brisbane, while in Townsville the rise was greater at 1.6 per cent. Excluding the effects of potato and onion prices, which in recent years have been subject to erratic seasonal fluctuation, the Brisbane index increase was larger at 1.2 per cent. This was caused by potato and onion prices decreasing during the quarter, while the overall price trend was upward.

The clothing and footwear group of the index, which has been increasing only slightly, rose at a greater rate during this quarter, providing the bulk of the rise in the complete index. Price rises were spread over a number of clothing items, with men's wear recording the greatest increase. The upward trend in footwear prices, apparent during the year, continued this quarter, but the rate of increase was not so pronounced.

Of the other groups of the index, food and groceries and house rents recorded a slight upward trend, while the miscellaneous group remained practically unchanged.

Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases^a, December Quarter, 1959

City	Food and Groceries			Clothing and Footwear		Miscellaneous Items	
	From Year Ended June, 1939	From Sept. Quarter, 1959		From Year Ended June, 1939	From Sept. Quarter, 1959	From Year Ended June, 1939	From Sept. Quarter, 1959
		A	A				
Brisbane	252.3	0.3	1.2	315.8	1.9	151.0	0.1
Toowoomba	260.1	0.2	1.1	317.2	1.9	149.0	0.0
Rockhampton	239.4	-0.1	0.5	308.9	2.1	166.0	0.1
Townsville	240.9	1.3	2.1	312.0	2.3	163.2	0.0
Bundaberg	243.2	0.7	1.0	315.0	2.1	152.0	0.2

a Minus (-) indicates a decrease.

Note. - A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

Food and Groceries

This section of the index was much more stable than during the previous quarter, registering a decrease of 0.1 per cent. in Rockhampton and increases varying from 0.2 per cent. in Toowoomba to 1.3 per cent. in Townsville. However, the small net variations in most cities were the result of price decreases in seasonal items, such as potatoes, onions, and eggs, offsetting increases in meat, bacon, and bread prices, and the food and groceries group index exclusive of potatoes and onions moved upward in all five cities.

Clothing and Footwear

The upward movement in this group was the greatest for some time ranging from 1.9 per cent. in Brisbane and Toowoomba to 2.3 per cent. in Townsville.

Miscellaneous

This group of the index showed no appreciable variation, the greatest increase being only 0.2 per cent. in Bundaberg.

Rent (4 and 5 roomed houses)

The rent index increased in Townsville, 3.4 per cent.; Brisbane, 0.7 per cent.; Toowoomba, 0.5 per cent.; and remained unchanged in Rockhampton and Bundaberg.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates

The Commonwealth industrial authority suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustments which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. Since that date, adjustments to the basic wages have been made from time to time, often on special applications, both by the Commonwealth and State industrial authorities. The latest of such applications to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission resulted in the addition of 15s. to the male basic wage in all States, with corresponding adjustments to female and juvenile rates, to operate from 11th June, 1959. At present, the New South Wales basic wage alone is varied automatically with movements of the index numbers. In Queensland and Western Australia, the State Industrial Courts have usually varied the wage after the index numbers have been published. Following publication of the index numbers for the December quarter, 1959, the Queensland State Industrial Court added 2s. to both the male and female basic wage rates. In Sydney, an "automatic" increase of 4s. was applied to the male basic wage rate and 3s. to the female rate. In Perth the basic wage remained unchanged. In Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania there was no change.

Current basic wage rates are given in the following table.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates
Australian Capital Cities

Capital City	Retail Price Index				Commonwealth Basic Wage	State Basic Wage						
	Sept. Qtr., 1959		Dec. Qtr., 1959			Males ^a	Males			Females	Date of Operation	
	A	B	A	B		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2595	2613	2615	2644	12 18 0	13	9	0	9	4	0	
Sydney	2711	2719	2744	2754	14 3 0	14	3	0	10	12	0	
Melbourne	2706	2700	2738	2729	13 15 0	13	15	0	10	6	0	
Adelaide	2665	2672	2690	2689	13 11 0	13	11	0	10	3	0	
Perth	2830	2821	2824	2821	13 16 0	14	1	6	9	3	0c	
Hobart	2819	2825	2846	2851	14 2 0	14	2	0	10	11	6	
											1.7.59b	

Note: A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.
a Operative first pay-period beginning on or after 11th June, 1959. The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b These rates operate from the first pay-period commencing on or after the date shown.

c By a judgment of the West Australian Industrial Court on 30th January, 1960, the female basic wage for the metropolitan area was declared as £10 11s. 2d. to operate from the first pay-period following declaration.

The "C" Series Retail Price Index

(Base for Each Section: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-27 = 1000)

City	Year Ended June, 1939	Year Ended Sept., 1959	Year Ended Dec., 1959	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1958	March, 1959	June, 1959	Sept., 1959	Dec., 1959
1. Aggregate - All Groups								
Brisbane ..	863	2556	2578	2525	2550	2552	2595	2615
Toowoomba ..	851	2504	2521	2488	2497	2494	2537	2555
Rockhampton ..	861	2559	2588	2510	2558	2561	2608	2623
Townsville ..	912	2690	2728	2629	2700	2695	2737	2781
Bundaberg ..	841	2535	2559	2498	2532	2538	2571	2596
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	2561	2584	2527	2557	2558	2600	2622
2. All Groups EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a)								
Brisbane ..	863	2574	2599	2547	2562	2575	2613	2644
Toowoomba ..	851	2520	2538	2508	2504	2513	2553	2581
Rockhampton ..	861	2577	2606	2533	2564	2581	2629	2651
Townsville ..	912	2713	2750	2660	2714	2718	2758	2811
Bundaberg ..	841	2552	2579	2519	2537	2557	2596	2625
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	2579	2604	2550	2568	2580	2619	2650
3. Food and Groceries								
Brisbane ..	856	2936	2972	2874	2945	2919	3006	3016
Toowoomba ..	814	2888	2906	2858	2898	2870	2925	2931
Rockhampton ..	895	2942	2996	2822	2952	2953	3042	3038
Townsville ..	955	3139	3196	3030	3195	3119	3213	3256
Bundaberg ..	903	2998	3044	2916	2995	3003	3077	3099
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	2949	2986	2881	2961	2934	3019	3030
4. Food and Groceries EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a)								
Brisbane ..	856	2993	3033	2939	2981	2987	3063	3101
Toowoomba ..	814	2932	2954	2916	2916	2923	2971	3004
Rockhampton ..	895	2992	3052	2882	2972	3010	3104	3121
Townsville ..	955	3206	3263	3121	3242	3185	3277	3346
Bundaberg ..	903	3049	3101	2975	3010	3057	3152	3185
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	3004	3046	2946	2994	2999	3076	3114
5. Clothing and Footwear								
Brisbane ..	829	3352	3378	3340	3331	3353	3382	3447
Toowoomba ..	829	3371	3392	3373	3347	3366	3396	3459
Rockhampton ..	845	3361	3387	3351	3346	3360	3385	3455
Townsville ..	840	3356	3386	3340	3337	3363	3384	3461
Bundaberg ..	839	3389	3412	3390	3369	3386	3411	3482
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	831	3355	3381	3344	3334	3356	3384	3450

(a) Excluded as from September Quarter, 1955.